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AUTHOR Pajak, Edward
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ABSTRACT

Identification of the dimensions of effective supervisory practice is the focus of this literature review of the past 15 years. The two main objectives are to identify the knowledge, attitudes, and skills for effective educational supervision and to verify the importance of the knowledge, attitudes, and skills from a sample of practitioners. The literature review focuses on supervision textbooks and on research that examines the relationship between leadership in schools and instructional effectiveness. Knowledge, attitudes, and skills are classified into 12 categories representative of the dimensions of supervisory practice: (1) community relations; (2) staff development; (3) planning and change; (4) communication; (5) curriculum development and implementation; (6) improving the instructional program; (7) service to teachers; (8) observing and conferencing; (9) problem solving and decision-making; (10) research and program evaluation; (11) motivating and organizing; and (12) personal development. Identification of these dimensions legitimates the professional status of supervision in education. Practitioners must therefore strive for self-determination in establishing supervisory guidelines to avoid regulation by uninformed outside policymakers. (95 references) (LMI)

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IDENTIFICATION OF DIMENSIONS OF SUPERVISORY PRACTICE IN EDUCATION: REVIEWING THE LITERATURE*

Edward Pajak
124 Aderhold Hall
College of Education
University of Georgia
Athens, GA 30602

Prepared for presentation at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Boston, Massachusetts - April 16-20, 1990

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Supervision in education is poorly defined as a professional practice. Despite the fact that supervision is considered by many to be the primary process by which instructional excellence is achieved and maintained, experts in the field have observed that supervision in education has not yet been clearly circumscribed (Wiles and Bondi, 1986) and that "confusion" and "uncertainty" remain concerning key issues (Sergiovanni and Starratt, 1988).

One major trend during this decade of school reform has been the attempt to prescribe more closely the duties and functions of teachers, supervisors, and administrators, ostensibly to upgrade their status and improve their efficiency. Regardless of the benefits and drawbacks of such plans, what is alarming is that legislatures and courts in some states have taken the initiative in defining these duties and functions with little consultation from educators (Hazi, 1982, 1988).

A second trend, in contrast, has been the attempt by various professional associations such as the National Education Association, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, and the American Association of School Administrators, to establish criteria to define and guide professional practice. Also, the National Policy Board for Educational Administration, consisting of representatives from ten organizations, has recommended major changes in the training and certification of school administrators and supervisors.

The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development recently sponsored a study that was aimed at identifying dimensions associated with effective supervisory practice. The identification of dimensions of supervisory practice in education is allied with the second trend, which seeks to ensure professional self-determination for educators. One objective of the ASCD project was to review supervision textbooks and the research literature to identify the underlying knowledge, attitudes, and skills that have strongest support for representing highly effective supervision in education. A second objective was to verify the importance and relevance of the knowledge, attitudes, and skills with a sample of outstanding practitioners. This paper describes the process undertaken in the literature review and reports some of the results.

The questions "where to begin?" and "what to include?" are inevitably, if not explicitly, addressed in any review of the literature. In this study a decision was made to concentrate on writings published during the last fifteen years, despite the fact that literature in the field of supervision in education goes back many decades. The reason for limiting the review to the recent past is that the mid-to-late 1970's witnessed the culmination of one era and the beginning of another in the study of supervisory leadership in education. The mid-1970's, therefore, represented a logical starting point for this project.

One indication that the mid-to-late 1970's were a turning point is the completion at that time of several major studies of

supervision that focused on the identification of roles, responsibilities, and competencies of supervisors and curriculum leaders (e.g., Esposito, Smith, & Burbach, 1975; Sturges and Kollar, 1977; Sturges, et al., 1978). These studies did an excellent job of synthesizing the supervision literature which was available at that time, and presented a sound springboard for further inquiry.

Also, a number of research reports appeared in the late 1970' and early 1980's that sought to identify specific factors that characterize instructionally effective schools. These reports were followed throughout the 1980's by an unprecedented number of studies that focused on how various leadership positions within schools contribute to instructional effectiveness. The extensive "school effectiveness" and "leader effectiveness" literature that resulted from this trend offered untapped sources of insight into the dynamics of supervision in education.

With the issue of "where to begin" resolved, the question of "what to include" seemed fairly obvious. A primary emphasis, as already suggested, was on research that examined how leadership in schools contributes to instructional effectiveness and improvement. A second focus of the review was supervision textbooks and other books dealing with instructional leadership.

The review included the most recent editions of supervision textbooks published since 1975, as well as research literature available through the Educational Resources Index Center (ERIC)

data base and the Dissertation Abstracts International data base. The review focused on effective supervision and instructional leadership as practiced by superintendents, associate and assistant superintendents, district-level generalists and specialists, principals (elementary, middle/junior high, and high school), assistant principals, school-based supervisors (lead teachers and team leaders), department chairs, peer coaches, and mentor teachers.

Purposely omitted from consideration in the review were instruments and evaluation plans designed to assess entry-level competence or minimally acceptable criteria of performance. The objective throughout the project was to identify knowledge, attitudes, and skills that are characteristic of especially effective supervisory practice.

A team of nine advanced doctoral students conducted the review, with each student concentrating on literature relevant to one of the leadership positions mentioned above. The search yielded over three-hundred research documents, reviews of research, research-based articles and reports, and papers presented at meetings of educational associations. These documents and eighteen supervision textbooks were then reviewed, and specific statements of knowledge, attitudes, and skills contained therein were isolated and copied onto index cards. Several thousand statements of knowledge, attitudes, and skills were initially identified.

The team of nine doctoral students and a Project Advisory Committee comprised of the supervision faculty in the Department of Curriculum and Supervision at the University of Georgia, met on four occasions to discuss and sort the knowledge, attitudes, and skills derived from the literature review into broad categories. Wording of the statements was clarified and those that were closely related or duplicates were combined into single statements. As a rule of thumb, a knowledge, attitude, or skill had to be cited in at least two references in order to be included. Knowledge, attitudes, and skills that related to traditionally administrative functions such as facilities, student discipline, and personnel evaluation were removed from consideration, as were statements describing personal traits or characteristics. Statements were then grouped thematically into categories on the basis of content. Originally, thirty categories were identified from the combined knowledge, attitudes, and skills. These were collapsed into eleven categories. Upon further discussion and sorting, a twelfth category emerged.

The resulting twelve categories may be viewed as representing dimensions of supervisory practice. Specific knowledge, attitudes, and skills are associated with each. The twelve dimensions, along with brief descriptions, are presented below in the order in which they were identified:

Dimensions of Supervisory Practice

Community Relations - Establishing and maintaining open and productive relations between the school and its community;

Staff Development - Developing and facilitating meaningful opportunities for professional growth;

Planning and change - Initiating and implementing collaboratively developed strategies for continuous improvement;

Communication - Ensuring open and clear communication among individuals and groups throughout the organization;

Curriculum - Coordinating and integrating the process of curriculum development and implementation;

Instructional Program - Supporting and coordinating efforts to improve the instructional program;

Service to Teachers - Providing materials, resources, and assistance to support teaching and learning;

Observing and Conferencing - Providing feedback to teachers based on classroom observation;

Problem Solving and Decision Making - Using a variety of strategies to clarify and analyze problems and to make decisions;

Research and Program Evaluation - Encouraging experimentation and assessing outcomes;

Motivating and Organizing - Helping people to develop a shared vision and achieve collective aims;

Personal Development - Recognizing and reflecting upon one's personal and professional beliefs, abilities, and actions.

The twelve dimensions listed above are clearly addressed in the existing literature on educational supervision, although the dimensions are discussed by different authors in various combinations and with varying degrees of emphasis. To illustrate this point, chapter references to each of the twelve dimensions of practice in eighteen supervision textbooks published since 1975 are illustrated in Table 1 (source: Pajak, 1989a, p.75).

While all twelve dimensions are represented quite well in the textbooks collectively, certain dimensions receive greater attention than others. For example, staff development, planning and change, instructional program, service to teachers, and observation and conferencing are addressed more frequently by textbook authors than the other dimensions. In contrast, references to community relations, problem solving and decision making, and personal development appear less often in textbooks on supervision in education. It is also interesting that practically every textbook omits one or more of the dimensions entirely. One might conclude, therefore, that familiarity with several authorships is necessary for an understanding of the supervision field.

The specific statements of knowledge, attitudes, and skills that are associated with each of the twelve dimensions and their supporting references in the literature are not included in this paper. However, the results of the literature review for the dimensions labelled "communication" are presented on Tables 2, 3, and 4 which follow (source: (Pajak 1989a, pp. 28-31).

The dimension of supervisory practice labelled "communication" was defined as "ensuring open and clear communication among individuals and groups throughout the organization." As illustrated in Table 2, the literature suggests that knowledge of communication theory, of human relations theory, of relationships within groups, of relationships among groups, and of conflict resolution strategies are important to this dimension.

Attitudes cited as important by authors in the field are presented in Table 3. These include an acceptance of diverse viewpoints, being responsive to the concerns and aspirations of others, encouraging mutual trust, being open and approachable, being collegial, and committed to open channels of communication.

Table 4 lists the skills identified in the literature that are relevant to effective practice in the area of communication. These skills include: listening attentively, speaking clearly, writing clearly and concisely, using and interpreting nonverbal behavior, creating opportunities for professional dialogue, communicating effectively with differenct audiences, and managing conflict.

Discussion

Practitioners of medicine and law established standards of practice through their professional associations many years ago. In response to widespread criticism of education during the past decade, several groups have called for the development of similar

standards for educators. An ambitious effort to establish standards of practice for teachers has been undertaken by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, which is funded by the Carnegie Corporation. This group has been working for close to three years toward the identification of distinct sets of standards of practice for teachers that would apply to different content areas and ages of students. The National Board plans to offer a voluntary national certification system starting in 1993. Unlike state certification which is compulsary and documents the attainment of minimally acceptable entry-level performance, national board certification would be a mark of distinction that would certify the attainment of an advanced level of proficiency.

The literature review reported here was sponsored by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development as the first phase of a "Supervisory Proficiency Recognition Project." The intention of this program is to eventually provide "voluntary recognition of highly competent supervisory personnel, and to meet the profession's responsibility for defining the field of supervision."

This study represents a step toward defining the discipline of supervision in education and has potentially far-reaching implications for research, training, and practice. The twelve dimensions have been verified as important to supervisory practice by a national sample of over one thousand outstanding practitioners (Pajak, 1989a). Further analysis is currently

underway to identify the knowledge, attitudes, and skills that are most relevant to effective performance for each specific leadership position included in the survey. An interesting question is whether or not effective practice by content-area specialists requires additional knowledge and skills related to subject-matter.

An agreed upon body of knowledge and skills along with a set of shared values and attitudes are the hallmarks of a profession, and distinguish a professional from a nonprofessional. Exceptional practice, Schon (1983, 1987) reminds us, also requires reflection on the part of the professional to make sense of the uncertainty, instability, and uniqueness of practical problems that are faced each day. The dimensions of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that have been identified here may provide a basis for more firmly establishing the pofessional status of supervision in education. Nevertheless, responsibility for infusing artistry and improvisation to arrive at virtuosity in supervision will continue to reside with the individual practitioner.

As both legislatures and professional associations continue to strive to clarify the duties and enhance the prestige of educational practitioners, guidelines for supervision and for positions that involve supervisory responsibilities will be needed. If the identity of supervision as a practice and as a field of study is to be maintained, the elements and parameters that define supervision in education must be established. Some

individuals may object to the development of standards of practice for educational supervision because they call attention away from the essential artistry that distinguishes truly excellent practice from the mundane. However, if we in the field of supervision do not accept the challenge of developing acceptable standards someone else will.

Members of the faculty of the Department of Curriculum and Supervision who comprised the Project Advisory Committee for the Identification of Supervisory Proficiencies Project included:

Dr. Theresa M. Bey
Dr. Ray E. Bruce
Dr. Mary F. Compton
Dr. Gerald R. Firth
Dr. Edith E. Grimsley

The research team also included the following doctoral students and practicing supervisors:

Letty Carr
Barbara Duke
Mary Guerke
Patricia Heitmuller
James Kahrs
Sheila Kahrs
Lewis McAfee
Rebecca Smith
Hannah Tostensen

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TABLE 1

DIMENSIONS OF SUPERVISORY BEHAVIOR

REFERENCED TO CHAPTERS IN TEXTBOOKS

BOOK	COMMUNITY RELATIONS	STAFF DEVELOPMENT	PLANNING AND CHANGE	COMMUNICATION	CURRICULUM	INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM	SERVICE TO TEACHERS	OBSERVATION AND CONFERENCING	PROBLEM-SOLVING AND DECISION-MAKING	RESEARCH AND PROGRAM EVALUATION	ORGANIZING AND MOTIVATING	PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT
ACHESON AND GALL	12	1 3, 12	4	12	1 12	12	12	2, 5 10, 12	10		11	
ALFONSO, FIRTH AND NEVILLE	11	10 12	2, 8 9, 10	6		3	10	10	7	10	5	5 10, 13
BEACH AND REINHARTZ		11	12	5	6	7		8 9			4	
BLUMBERG		3 16, 17		3 5		3 16	5 9	12	7 12	2	8	12
CHAMPAGNE AND HOGAN			10 12, 16	7 8			9	11, 13 14, 15		2 3	1	4 5
GLATTHORN		3 4				1		2 5				
GLICKMAN		15	19	6 7	16	11 14	14	14	10	13	4	6
GOLDHAMMER, ANDERSON, AND KRAJEWSKI			7 8	9 10			3	3, 5 6, 9		10		4
HARRIS	1	1 4, 9	1 2, 4		1	1 2, 8	1	5 7	8	8	1	
HOY AND FORSYTH			1			1 2, 9	1 5	1 3, 9	2 14		1 2	
LOVELL AND WILES		11	13	5 6	7	8	8	8 11	10 12	11	4 11	
LUCIO AND MCNEIL	1 2	6	2, 4 5, 6 9	2 8	6 13	2 6, 10	13	1 2, 11	4 5	5 6, 12		3
NEAGLEY AND EVANS	4	9	6	9	10 11	8	8 11	7	2	2	2	8
OLIVA	1 14	1 9	3 9	10 14	1 7, 14	3, 4 5, 6	1	4 11, 12		8	1 14	14
PAJAK	11	6 7	5 7, 12	5 12	5 6, 7	6, 7 9, 11	6	12	4		5 9	9
SERGIOVANNI AND STARRATT	7	18			14	14		17 19		15	4 5, 8	13
TANNER AND TANNER	4	4 13			4 11, 12		4	6		4	4	
WILES AND BONDI		8 9	2 9, 11		5	6		22		10	2 4, 7	

Table 2**

Communication - Ensuring open and clear communication among individuals and groups throughout the organization.

Relevant Knowledge

* **Knowledge of communication theory.**
  (Alfonso, Firth, & Neville, 1980; Fidler, 1986; Mayo, 1982; Moon, Niemeyer, and Simmons, 1988; Sullivan, 1982; Tanner & Tanner, 1986; Turner, 1983)

* **Knowledge of human relations theory.**

  (Chistenson & Turner, 1977; Hoy & Forsyth, 1986; Neagley & Evans, 1980; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1988; Sturges & Kollar, 1977)

* **Knowledge of relationships within groups.**

  (Burton, 1987; Galvez-Hjornevik, 1986; Hoy & Forsyth, 1986; Latham, 1987; Lucio & McNeil, 1979; Prather, Hartshorn, & McCreight, 1988; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1988)

* **Knowledge of relationships among groups.**

  (Afifi, 1980; Cawelti & Reavis, 1980; Hoy & Forsyth, 1986; Lucio & McNeil, 1979; Pitner & Ogawa, 1981; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1988; Weber, 1987)

* **Knowledge of conflict resolution strategies.**

  (Canizaro, 1985; Faria, 1984; Fidler, 1986; Pajak, 1989; Richmond, McCraskey, & Wagner, 1981; Wall & Nolan, 1987)

**Source: E. Pajak, Identification of Supervisory Proficiencies Report. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1989.

Table 3**

Communication - Ensuring open and clear communication among individuals and groups throughout the organization.

Relevant Attitudes

* **Accepting of diverse viewpoints.**

  (Beck & Seifert, 1983; Canizaro, 1985; Danley & Burch, 1978; Lunsford, 1988; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1988)

* **Responsive to concerns and aspirations of others.**

  (Beck & Seifert, 1983; Canizaro, 1985; Cook, 1983; Fraser, 1980; Hoy & Forsyth, 1986; Lunsford, 1988; Neubert & Bratton, 1987; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1988)

* **Encouraging mutual trust.**

  (Beck & Seifert, 1983; Canizaro, 1985; Diamond, 1978; Lunsford, 1988; Neagley & Evans, 1980; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1988)

* **Open and approachable.**

  (Beck & Seifert, 1983; Blase, 1987; Canizaro, 1985; Danley & Burch, 1978; Floyd, 1986; Godley, Wilson, & Klug, 1986-87; House, 1981; Hoy & Forsyth, 1986; Lunsford, 1988; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1988)

* **Collegial.**

  (Danley & Burch, 1978; Dryden, 1975; Hoy & Forsyth, 1986; Kottkamp & Mansfield, 1985; Lunsford, 1988; Lyman, 1987; Pajak, 1989; Proud, 1978; Salley, 1980; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1988; Smyth, 1986; Young & Heichberger, 1975)

* **Committed to open channels of communication.**

  (Blase, 1987; Danley & Burch, 1978; Godley, Wilson, & Klug, 1986-87; Hoy & Forsyth, 1986; Wimpelberg, 1987)

**Source: E. Pajak, Identification of Supervisory Proficiencies Report. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1989.

Table 4**

Communication - Ensuring open and clear communication among individuals and groups throughout the organization.

Relevant Skills

* **Listening attentively.**

  (Blase, 1987; Blumberg, 1987; Butt, 1981; Fagan & Walter, 1982; Kriekard & Norton, 1980; Neill, 1983; Sullivan & Walker, 1981; Weber, 1987b)

* **Speaking clearly.**

  (Butt, 1981; Duke, Showers, & Imber, 1980; Floden, et al., 1988; Gronn, 1984; Heller & Quartraro, 1977; Kriekard & Norton, 1980; Larsen 1987; Neagley & Evans, 1980; Rutherford, 1984; Sullivan, 1982; Sange, 1982)

* **Writing clearly and concisely.**

  (Blase, 1987; Burch & Danley, 1980; Floden, et al., 1988; Kriekard & Norton, 1980; Miserandino, 1986; Neagley & Evans, 1980; Rutherford, 1984; Sturges & Kollar, 1977)

* **Using and interpreting nonverbal behavior.**

  (Sergiovanni, 1985; Sturges & Kollar, 1977)

* **Creating opportunities for professional dialogue.**

  (Afifi, 1980; Braukman, 1980; Butt, 1981; Fraser, 1980; Godfrey, Wilson, & Klug, 1986-87; Heller & Quartraro, 1977; Hoy & Forsyth, 1986; Lucio & McNeil, 1979; Neagley & Evans, 1980; Pajak, 1989; Sergiovanni, 1984; Sullivan, 1982; Wimpelberg, 1987)

**Source: E. Pajak, Identification of Supervisory Proficiencies Report. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1989.

(Continued on next page)

(Table 4 continued)

* Communicating effectively with different audiences.

(Beck & Seifert, 1983; Beck, et al., 1981; Canizaro, 1985; Danley & Burch, 1978; Fidler, 1986; House, 1981; Kinzy & Fruits, 1977; Kriekard & Norton, 1980; Lunsford, 1988; Lyman, 1987; Marcial, 1984; Merenbloom, 1983; Norton & Kriekard, 1987; Pajak, 1989; Perrine, 1984; Pitner & Ogawa, 1981; Price, 1977; Reed & Conners, 1982; Ritz & Cashell, 1980; Sandburg, Drewski & MacArthur, 1976; Sullivan, 1980, 1982; Swift, 1981; Tanner & Tanner, 1987; Williams, 1988; Young & Heichberger, 1975; Zimpher & Howey, 1987)

* Managing conflict.

(Afifi, 1980; Beck, et al., 1981; Blase, 1987; Blumberg, 1987; Cawelti & Reavis, 1980; Costanza, Tracy & Holmes, 1987; Deal, 1987; Faria, 1984; Lee, 1987 Lucio & McNeil, 1979; Neagley & Evans, 1980; Norton & Kriekard, 1987; Pajak, 1989; Price, 1987; Reed & Conners, 1982; Richmond, McCraskey, & Wagner, 1981; Sergiovanni, 1984; Sullivan, 1982; Thompson & Ziemer, 1982; Wall & Nolan, 1987; Weaver & Gordon, 1979)